

**Secretary Belshé Opening Remarks  
California Child Welfare Council Meeting  
March 18, 2008**

Good morning and welcome to the second the meeting of the California Child Welfare Council. I am Kim Belshé, Secretary of the California Health and Human Services Agency, and Co-Chair of the Council. To my left/right is my fellow Co-Chair, Associate Justice of the California Supreme Court, Carlos Moreno. As I mentioned at our first meeting last November, this council is unique in many ways including the shared leadership role between the Executive and Judicial Branches of State Government. We were very pleased to learn that the Chief Justice designated Justice Moreno as Council Co-Chair given his deep personal commitment to California's children, youth and families, both on a personal level as a relative caregiver and professional level as the Chair of the Blue Ribbon Commission (BRC) on Children in Foster Care. We look forward to our continued, collaborative working relationship with the courts and to hearing from Justice Moreno in a few moments on the BRC's set of proposed recommendations, some of which I understand might directly impact our work on this council.

I would like to devote the remainder of my opening remarks to outlining

briefly the thoughts behind how our day is structured and why we have proposed adding a second meeting to our strategic framework development discussion on April 14. I also will speak broadly to a proposed timetable for completion of our work on the strategic framework.

I have deliberately used the word, “proposed,” because nothing is written in stone...we welcome the interactive dialogue later this morning on whether the course we are about to put forth seems reasonable.

At our first meeting last November, we proposed a rather ambitious agenda for the March meeting. Simply, we set out to complete much of the discussion around the strategic framework by the conclusion of this, our second Council meeting.

Upon further consideration of the course we adopted in November, both Justice Moreno and I felt it was important to ensure that Council Members be able to make informed choices about the strategic framework. We are quite fortunate to have considerable expertise, commitment and experience represented on the Council on issues affecting the child welfare system. At the same time, we acknowledge that it would be unreasonable to assume that

each of us has had the opportunity to sufficiently delve into each of the dozen or more issues Council Members articulated at the November meeting to make a determination today on what the initial, say, three Council challenges should be.

That is why we have proposed a series of educational workshops – three today and three at the April 14, 2008, meeting. These workshops have been organized and structured around issues articulated by the Council last November. We will hear more about the organization process later on.

The learning goals of each workshop would be to present major challenges around each issue in question, to inform us about current work to address the challenges, if any, and to tell us how the issue meets five criteria we have developed to help the Council make determinations on which issues to initially select. We will speak in greater detail about the five issue criteria before lunch.

Each workshop will conclude with an opportunity for the Council to engage our presenters. Where possible, we have asked Council Members with subject matter expertise to lead these presentations and to incorporate the voice of youth.

Let me extend our personal gratitude to the Council Members who have stepped up to the plate today, as well as our guest presenters from outside the Council. Thank you for the time and expertise that you are providing to our council.

I also wish to take a moment to acknowledge upfront the challenge in addressing many of these issues in the limited time allotted. We hope, however, that the oral presentations – in addition to the written material that has been provided in your resource binders – will provide sufficient information upon which to make decisions.

It would be our goal at the conclusion of the educational workshops at the April 14<sup>th</sup> meeting to facilitate a thoughtful discussion in the afternoon on the core elements of the strategic framework. The strategic framework is an important document as we have learned from the experience of the BRC. It will serve as our reference point for conducting future Council business.

The proposed core elements of the framework include the Council's vision and mission statements, guiding principles, core criteria for issue selection,

and an initial list of three issues that will form the basis of the Council's work over the next 12 to 24 months.

We also would hope at the April meeting to begin a discussion – and time permitting, come to resolution – on how the Council will organize its work around the top issues...namely, our committee structure. This structure would be captured in the strategic framework as well.

If we could achieve these goals by the end of the April meeting – conclude the Council Member educational process and come to resolution on the core elements of the strategic framework including committee structure – we would propose using the month of May and early June to convene committees to develop two or three goals with objectives for each issue area. These goals and objectives would be brought back, along with an initial draft of a Council strategic framework, to the Council for discussion and approval at the June 18, 2008, full Council meeting here in Sacramento.

To summarize, we have designed the March and April Council meetings to educate members on the issues before us and to dialogue about the strategic framework, with the hope that the full Council would complete work on and

approve a strategic framework at the June 2008, Council meeting. This proposed timetable would in effect mean that we would begin, in earnest, the process of developing Council recommendations in the summer.

Let me say again that nothing we have proposed is written in stone. We are open to alternatives in reaching our goal of an approved strategic framework in June. We want this process to be as collaborative and Council Member-driven as possible. We look forward to hearing your thoughts later today.

Now allow me to turn the microphone over to my colleague, Justice Moreno, for his opening remarks and to share with us the important work of the Blue Ribbon Commission on Children in Foster Care. Justice Moreno...